DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 136 114 CG 011 141

TITLE	Careers Canada, Volume 10: Careers in Sales.
INSTITUTION	Department of Manpower and Immigration, Ottawa (Ontario).
PUB DATE	76
NOTE	38p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Printing and Publishing, Supply and Services Canada, Ottawa, Canada K1A OS9 (HC $1.00, Canada, $1.20, other countries, Catalogue No. MP70-20/10-1976).
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.83 HC-$2.06 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Career Change; Career Choice; *Career Opportunities; *Employment Opportunities; Guides; *Jobs; Merchandising; *Occupational Information; Retailing; Salesmanship; *Sales Occupations
IDENTIFIERS	*Canada

ABSTRACT

This booklet, one of a series on Canadian career opportunities, is designed for those who are interested in a career in sales. The sales occupations described include manufacturers, wholesale, technical and scientific sales representatives, sales managers, purchasing agents and buyers, and retail sales persons and managers. Special sales careers described include real estate agents, insurance sales, travel agents, auctioneers and security sales persons. Ideal background, education, qualifications, training, working conditions, salary and future outlook of each position are incorporated in profiles of individuals employed in these sales positions. (JTB)

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Manpower and Immigration
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Available by mail from

Printing and Publishing
Supply and Services Canada
Ottawa, Canada K1A 0S9

or through your bookseller.

Catalogue No. MP70-20/10-1976 Price: Canada: $1.00
ISBN 0-660-00480-1 Other countries: $1.20

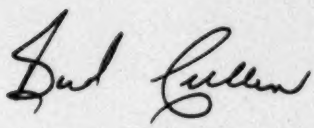
Price subject to change without notice.

MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER

All Canadians must be given the opportunity to determine their abilities, develop them through education and training, and apply their talents in a meaningful occupation. To achieve this goal, sound information must be made available to every Canadian at a stage in their development where fruitful decisions can be made. Careers – Canada is a major effort towards this end.

The benefits of the Careers – Canada series should affect many people: the student considering entrance into the world of work; the worker seeking to change occupations; the prospective immigrant; the manpower or vocational guidance counsellor, in fact, anyone wishing to match people with jobs.

Many people have been involved in the production of Careers – Canada, I join them in wishing you every success in your career search.



Bud Cullen

NOTE TO READERS

The ultimate judge of any material is the user. It is recognized that improvements can be made in the initial booklets and we ask all readers to forward any suggestions to us. The consolidation of these comments will allow us to better provide you with the type of information required.

Suggestions and comments should be addressed to:

Director,
Occupational and Career Analysis
and Development Branch,
Department of Manpower and Immigration,
305 Rideau Street,
OTTAWA, Ontario.
K1A 0J9

CONTENTS

IS THIS FOR YOU?	**1**
THE SALES CHAIN	**2**
NATURE OF WORK	**4**
Manufacturers' Representatives	4
Wholesale Representatives	5
Technical and Scientific Sales Representatives	7
Sales Managers	9
Marketing Managers	11
Purchasing Agents and Buyers	13
Retail Salespersons	15
Retail Sales Managers	17
Business Services Representatives	18
Insurance Sales Agents	21
Real Estate Agents	23
Securities Salespersons	24
Travel Agents	25
Auctioneers	26
PREPARATION AND TRAINING	**28**
ADVANCEMENT	**28**
FUTURE OUTLOOK	**29**
WHAT'S THE NEXT STEP?	**29**
RELATED PUBLICATIONS	**31**

Disponible en français sous le titre "Travailleurs spécialisés dans la vente"

IS THIS FOR YOU?

The success or failure of a company often depends on the ability of its sales staff. A product may sell by itself; more often it needs a sales presentation. A good salesperson can often turn a product into a financial success.

The art of selling is to influence the ideas and opinions of people so that they will buy your products rather than those of others. It is not easy. You must enjoy talking to people and have tact and diplomacy if you are to be a success. As well, you must be able to handle disappointments; for instance, when you have worked hard to complete a sale only to find that the customer has decided not to buy the product. If you have these qualities, sales can be a satisfying career. The financial rewards can also be good. The combination of salary and commission can be quite high and is limited only by the drive and initiative you put into selling your company's products.

In this booklet you will meet people who work in sales. Some work for manufacturing companies and sell products such as machinery or chemicals to other businesses. Others represent companies whose products they sell directly to a retail store for public purchase. Other salespersons sell services such as advertising.

You will also read that the hours of work are irregular. Store clerks, for example, though they have fixed hours, often work on Saturdays and some evenings. Those who sell services, such as life insurance, work in the evenings, the only time when their clients are at home. Company representatives may spend several nights, a week, or even longer away from home depending on the size of the territory for which they are responsible.

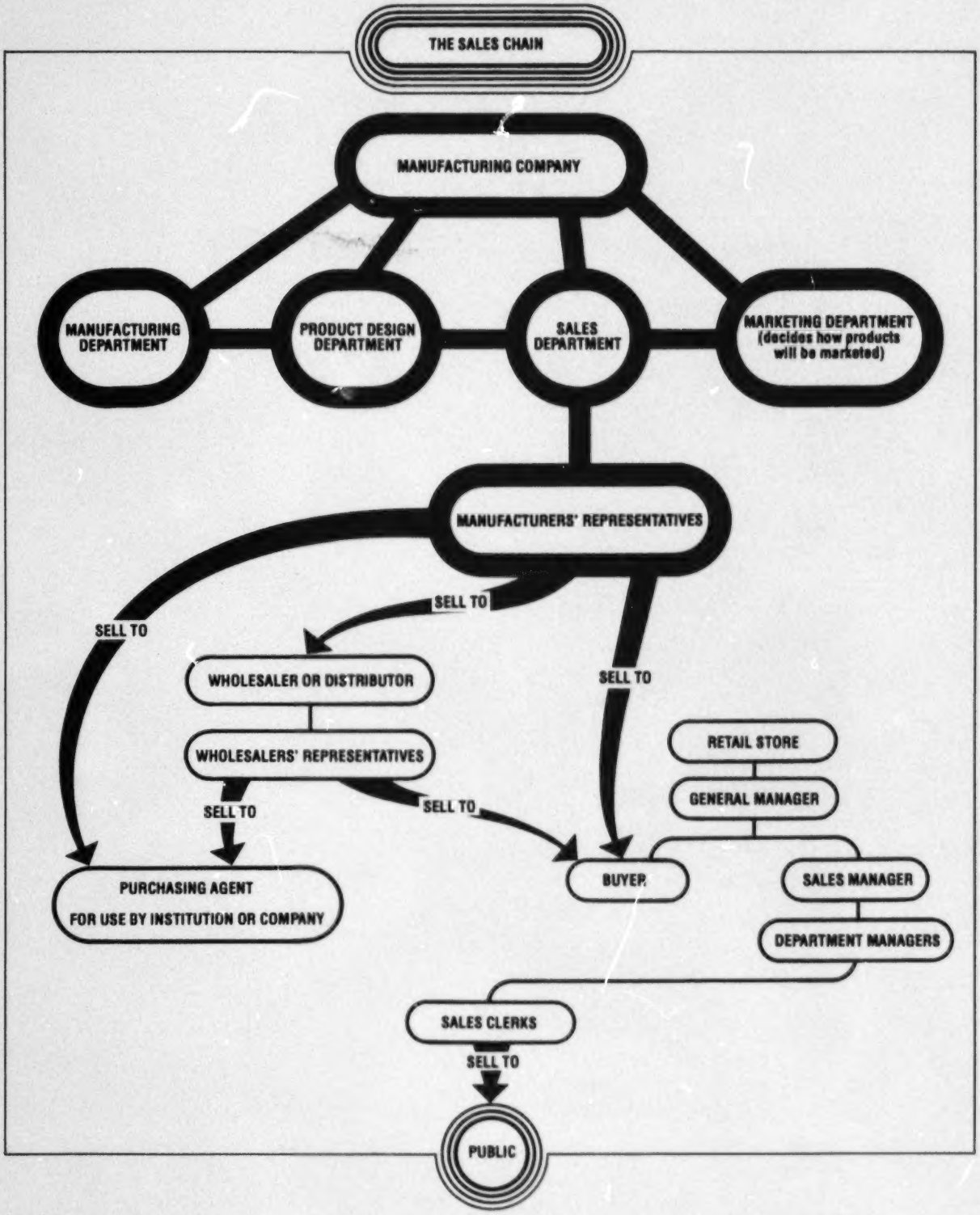
Why have these people chosen to work in sales? Would *you* want to? In this booklet, you will read things like: "There are no set hours, you can work as long as you like" or "I like meeting people" or "Sales work gives you a lot of independence."

The sales industry is open to both women and men who have personality, intelligence and some education and training. They are all aware that their contact with customers reflects on the entire business; consequently, they are polite and efficient. They also know that this is a business where success depends on hard work.

Academic qualifications for careers in this industry vary widely. Some careers, such as technical sales, require extensive formal education combined with considerable study of the company's products. Others require sufficient education to be able to communicate well with the customer.

Every sales situation is different. Some of these careers may appeal to you. Others may not. But reading about them may help you when considering your future career.

THE SALES CHAIN



THE SALES CHAIN

The goods you buy from retail stores have already been bought and sold several times before they reached the store shelves. Manufacturers buy raw materials for their products which are then sold either directly to retail stores or to distributing companies who buy products from a large number of manufacturers for resale to stores, not to the public. A wholesale food company, for instance, buys products from many producers such as bakeries, canned food companies, dairies and vegetable growers. A sales representative from a wholesale company will frequently approach a retail food store and offer a wide range of products, thereby allowing the food store to buy all its goods from one source rather than from hundreds of producers.

Manufacturers' representatives deal with other manufacturing companies, wholesalers and distributors, and large institutions such as commercial firms. In each case, they sell large quantities of a product for use in further manufacturing processes, for resale or for use by another industry.

Purchasing agents, or buyers, represent companies that buy the goods either for resale or company use. They buy materials, business services, supplies and equipment for use by their companies. They decide on their companies' needs and select goods from those offered by sales representatives.

In much the same way, buyers for retail stores select merchandise from ranges shown by sales representatives. They usually discuss style, type and quality with the store manager to meet the needs of store customers.

The final link in the sales chain is the retail store, where products are sold to the public by sales clerks. They display or demonstrate products personally to customers, advise on quality and suitability, wrap customers' purchases and take payments.

Sales clerks report to a department or sales manager. The managers judge which of the store's goods are in most demand and pass this information along to a buyer.

In this booklet you can read about the sales staff, the links in the chain that stretches from the manufacturer to the public. You will also meet people in other specialized sales areas who sell business services, decide how products should be packaged and advertised, or supervise the sales operations.

NATURE OF WORK

Manufacturers' Representatives or Commercial Travellers

Manufacturing companies employ sales representatives to sell products to wholesalers, other manufacturers, retailers and business establishments. They often travel fairly extensively over an allotted sales area and, for this reason, may be known as commercial travellers.

They show samples of their products to prospective buyers, and often carry catalogues containing descriptions and price lists. When a new product becomes available, these salespeople notify their regular customers and explain the qualities of the product.

Jean Lascelles works as a representative for a pharmaceutical company which sells drugs to pharmacies and stores in Quebec. Jean had always been interested in medical science and decided to become a pharmaceutical product sales representative so that he could work closely with the medical field. Jean is both a pharmaceutical and a medical agent, visiting drugstores to sell the company's products as well as informing doctors on the products available from his company.

As Jean is very interested in the development of new drugs and medicines, he spent some time looking for a pharmaceutical company that had a good research department. In the meantime he took university courses in science and languages, as the company requires that applicants have a proven learning ability in any field. Jean qualified for a position as a sales trainee because of his university background. Jean says, "I was given one month's training in sales techniques and medical information. I was also required to enrol in university courses that included the study of bacteriology, neurology, pharmacology and anatomy. At the end of the courses I had five hours of exams.

Selling pharmaceutical products requires thorough knowledge of each product. Jean visits the company's laboratory for a briefing on a new drug that he will soon be showing to doctors and pharmacists.

"When I visit a drugstore I give the pharmacist information on the products and describe their effects on the body," Jean explains. "I leave samples of new drugs and describe dosages, then check what is in stock to see if the customer is running low on any of our products."

The procedure is different when visiting a doctor, Jean explains. "I make appointments one week in advance and always bring complete files on our new drugs. I listen very carefully to doctors' questions in order to assess their needs. One of the main purposes of my visits to doctors is to let them know about our products, and the visits are usually spent in discussion."

Jean keeps up to date in his field by reading medical and pharmaceutical journals. Every two months there is a meeting of the company's sales staff to discuss the company's products and sales progress.

Jean is improving his knowledge of chemistry, biochemistry and organic chemistry through part-time studies. He advises anyone interested in pharmaceutical sales to study these subjects in high school or college, and to get some sales experience in any field.

"I sold fishing worms during high school vacations and sold vacuum cleaners as summer work in college," he says. "It all proved to be valuable experience later on."

Bob Bradley is a representative for a large British Columbia pulp-and-paper company. When he first left school he had no career plans and took a position as mail clerk. He studied part-time to become a Registered Industrial Accountant, and took an office position with his present employer. His plan was to join a large company and gain experience with the company's business, before moving on to a more senior position. He was in his early twenties when he saw a sales position posted on the company bulletin board, applied and was accepted.

After a few weeks of training in sales techniques, Bob accompanied experienced staff on sales calls.

"Knowing your own product and those of competing companies can only be learned through experience," Bob says. "I sell newsprint, and that means selling both service and quality. My territory covers the four western provinces. I meet a variety of people, from editors of small-town weekly newspapers to executives of large printing corporations."

Bob explains that much of his time is spent servicing accounts, making sure that customers are satisfied and that their orders are delivered on time.

"If newspaper publishers don't have enough newsprint, they can't publish," he says. "I have to make sure that my customers' orders are filled regularly. One of the most satisfying aspects of my work is that I am helping people in their businesses. Furthermore, I'm now my own boss, and set my own work schedule."

Bob feels that one of his main qualifications for his present sales position was his accounting course. "The more education you can get, the better," he says. "It doesn't prove that you can sell, but it does prove that you can learn."

Whatever the educational background, new sales staff are required to have additional training on the product they are to sell. A salesperson must keep informed about the company's products and pass the information along to customers.

Once a sale has been made, the representative immediately writes out an order form and sends it to the company's warehouse and dispatch department. He then checks that the goods are delivered on schedule. Much of the day is usually spent arranging and making sales calls, with time late in the day and into the evening for catching up on paper work.

Promotion to management positions is usually given to people with good sales records and an interest in the company's products. Part-time college or university courses either in business administration or in a field closely related to the company's products range would also help chances of promotion.

Wholesale Sales Representatives

Jay Metcalfe is a sales representative for a wholesale company in Whitehorse. The company buys camping gear, dry goods, drugstore goods, shoes and clothing from manufacturers and sells them to stores throughout the Yukon, the Northwest Territories and parts of Alaska. The company is thus a link between manufacturers and retailers.

After graduating with a Bachelor of Commerce degree, Jay worked in sales for a manufacturing company in Vancouver. Within a year he was promoted to a marketing position. But he missed the travelling and public contact of sales work, and moved back to Whitehorse to take up his present post.

Every four weeks or so Jay visits potential customers, taking samples of products, price lists and catalogues.

Representatives of wholesale distributing companies sell a variety of products for resale in retail stores. Jay sets up displays of products to show store representatives selections of goods available.

NATURE OF WORK

Like many wholesale representatives, Jay sets up a display in each town he visits, usually in a hotel suite. Besides finding new customers, Jay keeps regular clients posted on new products and price changes, as well as advising clients on how to display products in their stores.

Whether at the Whitehorse office or 'on the road,' Jay says there is always paper work to be done. He must organize his time carefully, setting up appointments in the morning and meeting with clients at lunch or in the afternoon. In the evenings Jay often does the paperwork.

"Orders must be written on special forms," he says. "Some are coded for computer use and you must fill them in carefully. You must also take customers' orders quickly and efficiently to avoid wasting their time and your own."

It is important, Jay adds, to keep sales calls brief, informative and pleasant. As soon as a customer decides to buy one product, you should quickly show other products which might interest the customer.

Pay is on a commission basis, so he receives a percentage of the cost of each item sold. "Being on a commission basis, the sky is the limit, especially here where I have such a large territory to cover," he says. "Successful people in the sales field are highly motivated to sell. There are no set hours, so you can work as long as you please. After-office hours are often spent entertaining clients. This lets me discuss their needs in a pleasant atmosphere. You must be interested in people, willing to talk with them and have the staying power to keep in touch with clients regularly.

"A business degree is an asset" he says. "My background in business and marketing is most helpful to me when making presentations to store managers because I can advise them on how to display the products and improve their sales."

Don Harris is a sales representative for a wholesale food company in New Brunswick. The company buys fruit, vegetables, candy and tobacco from producers and sells them to retail stores throughout the province.

"I average 25 calls a day, either in person or by telephone," Don explains. "I call to check that each store has enough supplies. Once a week I collect money from the week's sales. I usually check the store shelves to make sure they are well-stocked with our products."

A good salesperson works for the customers, Don says. "I enjoy taking care of their needs. That way, everyone's business improves and everyone is happy," he adds.

Technical and Scientific Sales Representatives

Certain technical industries require that their representatives have a scientific or technical background so that they can discuss their products or services with the engineering or scientific staff of potential customers. This background is in addition to training at the college or university level in business administration.

Fred Barron sells natural gas for heating and cooling systems in buildings. "Although usually I sell natural gas, I get involved in equipment sales," he explains.

Fred worked in the service department of the company for several years before moving into sales. He had Grade 12 with emphasis on science courses, and learned how to read engineering drawings and plans while repairing equipment in the service department. The ability to read drawings is essential in his sales work as he must be able to determine the heating and cooling needs of the building and the most suitable type of equipment.

"My training for the sales department consisted of about one month of reading and accompanying experienced representatives on visits to clients. Several new salespeople were trained at the same time; we had to learn about various kinds of equipment that use natural gas, including boilers, water heaters, dryers, and process equipment for industrial uses. We were also taught to calculate and quote comparative fuel costs and explain to clients the advantages of using our product.

"Even though the costs and benefits of a product can be quite standard, you must be able to explain them to customers in relation to their needs. You have to be honest, as there is often a large element of trust on the part of the customer when you quote costs and benefits," Fred explains.

Sales work in technical fields does not stop when the sale has been made. The representative must make sure that equipment is installed promptly and works to the customer's satisfaction.

Records must also be kept of all sales calls and progress with each customer. When a sale is made, an order must be written and copies forwarded to the installation and service departments for action. The records are kept on file in case the customer wishes to alter the service. The representative also keeps customers informed of any new equipment that might improve existing installations.

Hubert Lepine works as a sales representative for a large electrical engineering equipment company in Quebec. Hubert says: "I spend most of my time with engineering representatives from industry, giving technical information and discussing our equipment in relation to their needs."

Hubert, who has a degree in electrical engineering, worked for the company for two years as an engineer before he decided to move into sales. A friend who worked in the sales department had told him the advantages of the work, saying that there was plenty of opportunity to meet people and a real challenge in designing equipment installations to meet each customer's needs. He now sells a wide range of steam and water turbines, generators, transformers and computers, all of which require a high level of technical knowledge.

After taking a part-time course in business administration and sales, Hubert obtained his sales position. "There is tremendous variety in the work," he says. "You don't have to sit at a desk from 9 until 5 with a slide rule. Since I am the agent between the customer and the company, I have to check many technical details. After assessing the customer's needs, I advise on the equipment required and submit plans to the customer for further discussion. If it is accepted and an order placed for the equipment, then I've made a sale."

Hubert keeps customers informed about new equipment and periodically checks that their installations are working efficiently.

"To do my job well," he says, "you need a firm engineering background, you must be a diplomat and able to take the initiative in contacting new customers. You must always be available to help customers solve their problems and be willing to put in extra hours to catch up on paper work if necessary. I don't enjoy writing reports, but they must be done."

Jim Robinson, a sales representative for a large computer company, agrees that technical expertise and sales ability are essential ingredients in technical sales. Jim, who is based in New Brunswick, advises anyone interested in this career to study mathematics and computer science. Many companies, like the one Jim works for, provide training programs lasting up to six weeks to new sales staff. University or college courses in subjects related to sales are always an asset.

NATURE OF WORK

"A lot of preparation goes into each sales call," Jim says. "We judge the needs of each potential customer, and suggest an appropriate computer system. Much of our equipment is very expensive, and we offer a rental system to prospective buyers so that they can try out the equipment and assess its advantages."

Sales representatives must be well organized, Jim points out, as each working day includes planning sales calls plus writing up reports and orders. "You must always be responsive to unexpected phone calls and give your full attention to every customer," he says.

Geoff Ritter represents a petroleum company and sells oil to commercial companies which use oil as part of the manufacturing processes.

A degree in chemical engineering prepared Geoff for his present work in sales for a petroleum company. He must know the properties of the hundreds of different oils he sells.

"I sell over 2,000 kinds of oil, including lubricating, process and hydraulic oil, which are all basically similar oils refined to varying degrees," Geoff explains. "I have a degree in chemical engineering and worked in chemical process engineering before I switched to sales. After I was hired for sales work, the company gave me training in sales techniques and how to deal with people, as well as product information. That was a two-week intensive training program, and a three-week program was given six months after I started.

"About every six months or so the sales staff have a meeting with the manager to set sales goals for the next six months. We are paid by salary and not on a commission basis, so there is no real financial pressure to sell 'x' number of gallons or we don't get paid. Yet there is certainly pressure to meet the goals we have set for ourselves," Geoff says.

"I like sales work because it teaches you a management approach to things and because you are given a lot of independence," Geoff continues. "You have to manage your own time and are given your own area to cover. You can learn a lot in sales that will help for promotion to management posts."

The sales staff in Geoff's company are encouraged to join technical associations in order to meet people who use oil. These groups hold seminars where producers and consumers can meet to discuss their needs.

"Selling is a lot more rewarding than I thought it would be because there is always something to learn either from the customers or from members of the company who are trying to improve the quality of our products," Geoff says.

Geoff is undecided on his next career step. "I could move into a position as technical advisor, supplying technical help to the sales staff when they need it," he says. "It's also possible to move into management or production. My ambitions change, but with an engineering degree it's possible to go further and you have a chance to shape your own future."

Sales Managers

Sales managers are responsible for coordinating and supervising the work of a company's sales team. Whether they work for a company that produces tractors or toys, their basic responsibilities are to organize staff and set sales targets according to estimated demands. Sales managers often hire staff and set up training programs for new employees. As these positions require a thorough knowledge of sales methods and the company's products, promotion to sales manager is usually after several years' experience in the sales field.

Don Massey is now sales manager for a large chemical company, though he did not start out to be a salesman. "I was in the second year of a university chemistry program when I took an aptitude test that indicated I had a desire to communicate with people. Since I was studying chemistry, I felt it was a logical step for me to join the sales staff of a chemical company," Don says.

It was easy for him to make the right moves once he had made up his mind. "I decided in my third year of university that a couple of courses in commerce would be an advantage. And it has worked out well that way.

"When I graduated, I stepped into a sales job for a fisheries company. I had worked in the fishing industry while attending school, so I knew something of the business. I was given training on how to make sales calls and sent on a company-sponsored sales course.

"I spent several more years working with various food products companies before I finally found this position with a chemical company. Now my background in chemistry is coming in handy. It didn't take me long after I joined this company to move up to sales manager for western Canada.

"Almost all sales are based on long-term contracts for supplies of chemicals; I give the sales staff guidelines on the calculation of contract offers. If they have difficulty finalizing a deal, I step in. When the sale is completed, I'm responsible for checking on delivery of the product. My staff does most of the negotiating and checks back with customers to make sure they are satisfied. But I have to stay on top of everything.

"There are other details to look after. For instance, we employ an engineer who analyzes our customer's production methods to find how they use our products. I arrange for the engineer to meet the customers. Things like that make the difference between success and failure in business.

"What I like best about my work," he says, "is that it depends on negotiating long-term contracts beneficial to both the buyer and the seller. This is a good career for people who like to help others while helping themselves at the same time.

"When hiring sales managers, most companies look for university or community college graduates from business administration and marketing programs. Since you need to understand sales forecasts and market research data, a statistics or technical course would be very useful," Don says. For sales work in scientific or technical industries, a university degree such as engineering or science is usually required.

Sales training is generally provided by the company. "However," according to Don, "if you already have some sales training, this would definitely be an asset."

John Burbank became sales manager after working as a sales clerk in a department store. He decided to leave university after two years in a general arts program and took university evening courses in business administration while working at the store.

"I liked arts studies but felt that they weren't going to lead me into a career," John remembers. "So I quit after two years and became a salesperson in a large department store chain. I really had no qualifications beyond that level except that I was eager, and the company was prepared to promote workers on the basis of their performance. The business management courses also helped."

Even as a sales manager John continues to take part-time courses. "You can never know too much about business and personnel management in this work," he comments.

John works closely with his staff. "About 30 per cent of my time is spent training and reviewing their work. I spend considerable time explaining our product to the sales team. Selling is half knowledge and half enthusiasm; it's my job to see that the sales staff have both.

"I never forget that my main responsibility is to reach realistic sales and profit targets. In the final analysis, everything I do is directed towards this goal.

NATURE OF WORK

"I get a lot of satisfaction from watching a person grow as a salesperson," John says enthusiastically, "from the time he or she is hired until the time they move on." But he adds, "on the other hand, I dislike the amount of red tape and paperwork involved in large companies and ours is no different from any other."

John is still making his own career plans. "From here, I expect to become a branch manager," he says. "And eventually I hope to move to a managerial position in sales at our head office."

John has some advice for potential sales personnel. "It's initiative and experience that count once you start. To be a success, you must be outgoing and have organizational ability."

Peter Irving is a sales manager who continues to sell to customers. Last year, Peter was given the opportunity to transfer to the head office and work as a coordinator for national sales. However, he felt that there was more challenge working out of a district office and dealing personally with the customers.

"In this company, sales personnel are regarded as entrepreneurs, the kind of people who get out of the office and make their own way in the business world by making contacts with possible customers. It's an image that I like and I enjoy the challenge of selling."

Peter has strong ideas about the kind of person who should get into sales. "You have to be a self-starter," he says. "The only way to succeed is by being self-motivated. You have to have drive because it is too easy to waste your time. Since sales people work on commission here, and are paid according to the number of sales made, poorly-planned time means lower income.

"In this business, you have to call on your clients once or twice a week. The evening before, you should plan your day – who you are going to call on and what you'll try to sell. You're expected to check shelves to make sure your company products are well-displayed and stocked. Then, after the calls are finished, a good salesperson makes a report on each call of what was sold and any other information that might be needed for future reference.

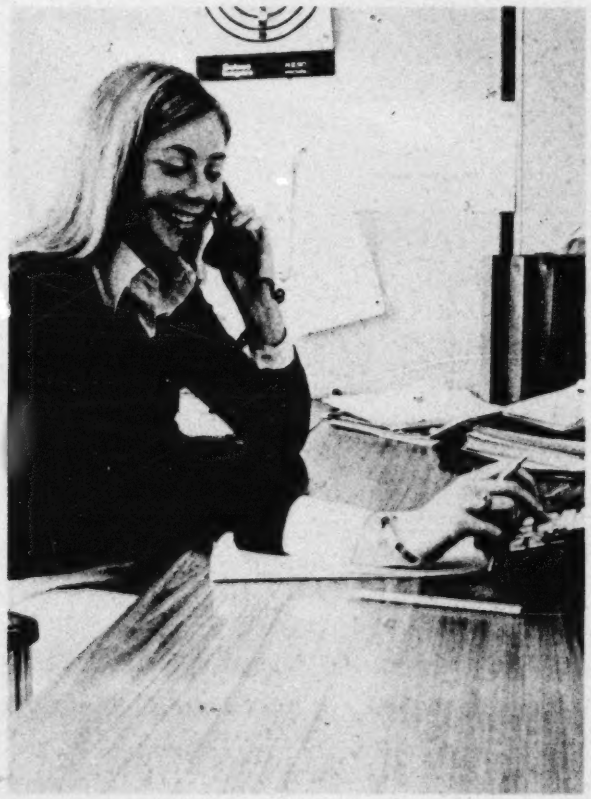
"High-school education is not sufficient. However, whether you have a university degree or a college diploma, the sales training is the same. You usually start on the sales desk, filling the orders from the sales people, until you are familiar with the products and prices. Field work with customers is first done with another salesperson. After that, making it to sales manager depends on your ambition."

Marketing Managers

What makes you decide to buy a product? The way it is packaged, a commercial you saw on TV, or a special offer of a 25-cent price reduction? Marketing or sales promotion managers as they are sometimes called, try to work out what makes you, the customer, buy a product. They decide how products should be promoted to boost sales and improve the company's image.

"Marketing means putting together all the things you need to get an item to the public," explains Kathy Fielding, a product marketing manager for a large Ontario-based food products company. "Our articles are divided into groups. I'm with the coffee group and work on the marketing and promotion of two particular brands of coffee."

As a marketing manager, Kathy plans advertising campaigns and decides how products will be promoted to the public. Package design, advertising and special offers must all be considered.



Kathy coordinates the total sales approach of her products. "We plan advertising campaigns a year ahead," she says, "and decide on consumer programs, such as coupons or contests, to boost sales. At intervals we give special offers to the stores who buy our products for resale; that's another way to stimulate consumer purchasing."

To discover public opinions on company products, marketing managers and their staff organize market research programs. These may involve putting people in stores or on street corners to ask the public their opinion of certain products. Other approaches involve offering free samples in a store or shopping mall and then asking for opinions.

"Any research on a product is usually organized by the marketing department, sometimes in co-operation with others such as the product design department," Kathy explains. "You have to achieve a certain level of skill and understanding of the company before you can move into a marketing position because you are so closely linked with other departments, especially sales. We give the sales staff the tools and the plans with which to sell things."

Kathy's interest in high school had been mathematics, which she also studied in university. "After I graduated, I knew I didn't want to teach but I wanted to put my math skills into practice. So I turned to business administration to use the skills I'd learned. I now have a Master's degree in business administration. One of the courses I took in graduate school was market planning which interested me in the promotion and sale of packaged goods."

Kathy joined a large company which offered on-the-job training for new marketing employees by putting them to work with an experienced marketing manager to learn about the company and its products. "It is a developmental program," Kathy says, "but the learning process never really stops. Since market and public tastes are always changing, you are always changing, you have to adapt your ideas and keep ahead of the trends. To communicate ideas quickly to other people you must also be able to express yourself well in both speaking and writing.

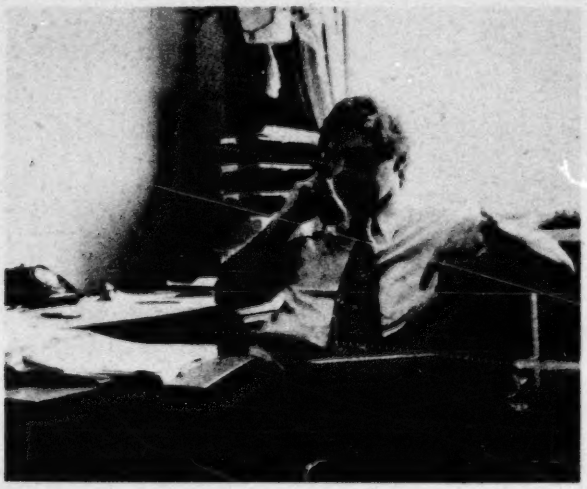
"What I find fascinating is that the market is so unpredictable," Kathy says. "From research studies you know that there is an identified need for a certain product and think you are promoting it in

just the right way. Then, when you conduct a research program into the results of an advertising campaign, you may find that customers are interpreting it in a totally unexpected way."

Kathy works out pricing and advertising expenditures and evaluates the results of marketing and sales campaigns against any improvements in sales figures. The effects of future campaigns and their costs must also be built into the company's budget. "I don't think anyone really likes sitting down and crunching away through rows of numbers, but it's necessary sometimes," Kathy says. "There's a lot of pressure in this work, especially when we are setting up a program or evaluating its progress. During an evaluation, I have to see how products are selling, compare those figures with the projections of how much I expected would sell and then, if I'm running low, work out what promotions are needed to increase sales."

Barry Barnum, a marketing manager with a food products company in British Columbia, points out that marketing is arranged on an annual pattern. "Our yearly plans are drawn up in the summer, which always creates pressure," he says. "We set our strategy for the coming year based on the company's sales targets and estimates of how much of each product can be sold. Sales goals are set by the sales managers and other executives of the company. Once we have goals, we can plan our advertising strategy to meet the sales objectives. The rest of the year is spent putting our plans into practice."

Marketing a product calls for long-range planning to meet sales goals. As a marketing manager, Barry plans advertising and promotion campaigns while bearing in mind the cost of such campaigns and the price of products to be sold.



Barry has a university degree in economics, which he now finds useful for seeing an overall perspective of the market, or what it is that people buy. "The most important qualification for this work," Barry thinks, "is an understanding of the sales function: you have to know what sells a product, and how to sell your own ideas to other people in the company."

An understanding of mathematics and basic accounting principles is also necessary, Barry feels, because you are always dealing with accounting information; for instance, how much of a product has been sold, the expenses of a campaign, or costs of a new packaging design.

"This work requires creativity," Barry says. "You have to think on your own, come up with original ideas, translate them into useful terms for your own products and then sell the ideas to higher management before organizing the campaign. You also have to pay strict attention to such details as what size label to put on a bottle or how large to make a package."

Although Barry notes that a university education is an advantage, he also points out that marketing staff must have a basic understanding of sales. This can be gained either by working in sales before moving into the marketing department, or by taking a part-time sales position while studying. This combination of education and experience would be an excellent start for a marketing career.

Purchasing Agents and Buyers

Every organization, no matter how large or small, must purchase supplies and services for its day-to-day operations. Industrial plants must have raw materials such as steel or chemicals from which to produce their line of manufactured goods. Commercial enterprises need stationery, typewriters and perhaps computer services while hospitals need bed linen, pharmaceuticals and food supplies.

Purchasing agents, or buyers are responsible for buying supplies in larger organizations.

In a busy office you would probably find that the purchasing agent seems to spend most of the day making telephone calls. This is to determine what the company needs and find out from suppliers the kinds and quality of supplies they can provide. As well, there are contracts and further calls or correspondence to ensure that deliveries are made on time.

Purchasing agents must also spend a considerable amount of time reading catalogues and trade journals to keep ahead of new developments and price changes.

Catherine Legault is a purchasing agent for a large Quebec hotel. She had worked as a secretary in a purchasing department before moving into her present position.

"I buy office supplies, kitchen equipment, staff uniforms, laundry products and cleaning supplies for the hotel," Catherine says. "I must keep within a budget allotted by the general manager, and get the best quality products at the lowest possible price."

Before she started in her present work, Catherine took a college course in business methods. This preparation helps her organize her schedule so that she has enough time to keep in touch with the hotel staff and the representatives of supplier companies.

"On large purchases, I ask suppliers to submit price tenders for goods," Catherine explains. "You have to be very resourceful to find the right goods at the right price, and must always be tactful with people. The work also takes a lot of perseverance to find exactly what you want."

If something goes wrong with equipment Catherine has bought, she must call the supplier for repair service. So whenever she places an order, she checks to make sure there is a service warranty.

Catherine also spends a great deal of time reading promotional literature describing various companies' products. She is constantly making decisions about which products are best suited to the hotel's needs and must be a 'comparative shopper' to keep up to date with what is available.

In very large companies a purchasing agent could handle a budget of millions of dollars. For such positions a university or college background in business administration and several years' experience are usually required. An accounting background is also an asset.

Whatever their background, purchasing agents must keep an open mind about new products that come into the market and be aware of alternative suppliers. They must also listen carefully to requests for purchases from other members of the company, always asking themselves, "What is the best product to meet this need?"

Marsha McDougall is the head purchasing agent for a Quebec-based company which manufactures stereo components. "This is work which requires both a good business mind and common sense," is Marsha's opinion. Every piece of equipment used to manufacture the company products is bought by Marsha's department.

"Of course, it's up to us to get the best prices," Marsha says, "but this isn't as simple as it sounds. Sometimes we buy a large quantity of transistors, for example, and we require tenders. This means that everyone who wants to sell transistors to us submits a bid stating the price of their product. My department is responsible for notifying suppliers to submit tenders. Alternatively, we read suppliers' catalogues and decide which materials would be best for us, although we can't do this if the items have to be manufactured to our specifications. It can get very involved and we deal with millions of dollars."

Price isn't Marsha's only concern, however. "We have to be sure that the supplier can meet our delivery dates, or else we'd be ready to start production without the necessary materials. And we must be certain that the materials will meet our

quality standards. There's no point in having the best price if the product is not delivered, or if it isn't good enough when it is delivered. For that reason, we inspect samples before placing large orders."

In order to know when the supplies will be needed, what the quality of the materials will be and how much is required, Marsha spends a lot of time with the company's engineers and sales staff. The engineers explain what materials are needed to manufacture the stereo components, and the sales staff predict how many products they will be able to sell. Finally, production supervisors determine when there will be machines and workers available to start production.

"It's all a matter of communication and knowing how to deal with suppliers," Marsha claims. "The only way to learn the business is to work in it, although a background in business administration is helpful."

When Marsha was working as a purchasing agent, before being promoted to department supervisor, she visited the company's suppliers to check on their manufacturing progress. Because the company imports numerous parts from Japan and the United States, she was out of the country for several weeks each year. But now she works in the head office and assistants visit the suppliers.

Buyers select goods from manufacturing and wholesale companies to be sold in retail stores. As a clothing buyer, Mary uses her knowledge of fashion to choose articles that will appeal to the store's customers.

"The surprising thing about this job," Marsha says, "is watching parts that you have bought being put together into something like an amplifier. It's fascinating. And I like being in a position where I can see results."

While purchasing agents buy materials for use within the company they represent, buyers for retail stores buy goods from manufacturers or wholesalers for resale to the public.

Mary Allison is a women's fashion buyer for a department store in Prince Edward Island. All customers are very much affected by her decisions. Every piece of clothing sold by the fashion department in that store is selected by Mary from thousands of articles manufactured by garment producers.

"There are now college programs for retail buyers," Mary points out, "and programs in business administration are also useful. But you must have a flair for fashion in this work. I'd studied fashion illustration and worked in the advertising department. Then I moved into sales for a couple of years. When the store manager asked me if I would like to try buying the women's clothes, I jumped at the chance."

Mary not only has to know what will sell, but has to know at least six months before the season. Mary buys fall stock in the spring and spring stock in the fall. Styles can change in a matter of weeks and Mary has to be able to predict what will happen to clothing styles between the time she places orders and the time the clothes appear on the racks. "I find I have to spend a lot of time of the floor observing customers," Mary says, "and I consult the sales clerks to get their opinions, too. Ultimately, though, I have to use my own judgement and hope that I'm right."

As sales representatives from the garment manufacturers bring samples of their garments to Mary's store, she spends most of her working day in the office. However, she occasionally attends major fashion shows in Canada and the United States. "The shows are the only way to know what is available and what the manufacturers expect the fashion trends will be," Mary explains.

What does Mary like most about her work? "The people and the variety. You meet all sorts of people, from sales reps to sales clerks, and have to try to please them all. I never like to say 'no' to a sales rep, because I feel that they try hard, but I must be selective about what I buy. And stock has to be changed regularly so that customers don't get bored."

Good clothing buyers are essential because they help build a store's reputation. So Mary could stay on in the same store at a good salary. However, she hopes to move into other areas of buying and then into general management. "I believe that it's possible to work up to store manager if you are sufficiently ambitious and intelligent," she says.

Retail Salespersons

The last link in the chain of selling goods is the retail store, where products are finally put on display for the public to buy

More than 300,000 people are presently working as sales clerks in stores. These are the people you meet every time you go to a store. The reputation of a store rests partly with its sales staff, for if customers are served in a pleasant manner they are likely to return to the store.

A position as retail sales clerk is a good start toward a selling career for many retail stores often promote promising sales clerks to junior management positions after they have gained experience.

Sales clerks advise customers about style, type and quality of the merchandise they are trying to sell. Having made a sale, they wrap the goods, ring up sales on a cash register, or make out charge slips. As well, they may stock shelves, write price tags, keep records of sales and order replacement stocks from the warehouse. In self-service stores, clerks may have limited duties such as wrapping parcels and receiving payment. In both instances, however, service must be given in a patient and courteous manner to maintain the reputation of the store.

A sales clerk is always pleasant and helpful to customers. Jim offers advice on style and quality to a customer in the clothing department.

NATURE OF WORK

Jim Abbott worked as a sales clerk several summers and during weekends while at school, and decided to make sales work a career. He now sells men's clothing in a large department store.

"I wanted to work for a large company because I thought there might be a chance for promotion after I got some experience," Jim says. "I also liked the idea of working on commission sales because that gives you an incentive to sell more. I went to the personnel department to ask about any work that was available, and filled out their application form.

"After I was accepted, I was given instructions on my first day about how to ring up a sale and how to handle charge accounts, credit card purchases and personal cheques," Jim says. "It takes about two months of training with the department manager and other sales staff before you know all the goods offered in the department. You always have to be aware of the latest items in stock."

Jim explains that he is responsible for a certain area of the department. He makes sure that it is neat and that the counters and shelves are fully stocked. "If the manager tells me we are running a 'special' or certain items have been advertised in the newspapers, I have to make sure those items are well displayed," he says.

"Most of the work involves approaching customers and trying, in a pleasant way, to find out what they are looking for so that I can show them what the store has to offer or suggest alternatives. I've found that you have to give an honest opinion when it is asked; if you flatter customers into buying something that you know they don't really want, you can be sure you won't see them again. If you are honest and say what you think, you might lose a sale today, yet customers will come back to the store because they trust you. I have several regular customers who ask for me because they trust my judgement in selecting suits," Jim says.

"I really like to make a big sale and see a customer walk away happy," Jim continues, "because then I've satisfied a customer and made some money for myself as well."

Jim says he is learning about inventory matters. He informs the manager which items are selling quickly so that more can be ordered. He notices when other items are sitting on the shelves unsold and suggests either a price reduction or a promotion 'special' to clear the shelves.

Jim hopes that his next step is to supervisor. He would then check on the work of other sales staff, order supplies and be responsible for merchandise received from suppliers.

"After that, if you show a real interest in the goods you are selling, you might get promoted to departmental manager or assistant buyer and help choose clothes from the manufacturers. The company encourages its sales staff to take part-time college or university courses in sales or business management, and pays for the courses. I think that's what I'd like to do," Jim says. "It's a definite aid to promotion and advancement if you are willing to learn and improve yourself.

"Anyone entering retail sales should realize that a good appearance and manner are essential. That's especially true when you are selling clothes, but whatever the department you should make a good impression," Jim says. "And if you apply yourself, there will be chances for promotion."

Retail Sales Managers

Art Duncan is now a department manager for a large Manitoba store. He started in an Alberta branch of the store as a sales clerk when he left high school with Grade 12. The manager of the department thought Art showed enthusiasm and recommended that he take a company-sponsored management training program, taught by senior managers of the store. Art noticed that several of the other people on the course had university degrees, and says there is now a tendency to hire university graduates from business administration or commerce programs.

He manages the books, toys and records department. "I think one of my most important duties is to create enthusiasm in the other sales staff in the department," Art says. "You must be able to motivate people to work well without applying too much pressure."

As Art is responsible for all the promotional planning of the department, he decides which goods will be promoted as specials and displayed in prominent areas. "I meet other managers and the store buyers to discuss what sort of merchandise we should sell. I am also given profit objectives, which are goals of profits to be made in a season. We spend a certain amount of money to buy goods, and then resell them for a little more than is paid. All this is worked into the store's budget, but I have to prepare a budget for my own department," Art says.

Now manager of the books and records department of a large store, Art began as a salesperson and was given a management training program by the company.

There are three possible promotions for Art. He says he could become an assistant divisional manager, responsible for several departments in the store; manager of one of the company's smaller stores; or buyer of goods from wholesalers or manufacturers for distribution and resale throughout the company's many stores. He wants the first of these positions, as he enjoys meeting the public and the satisfaction of making a decision and putting it into practice.

Promotion to management positions in stores is usually given to those with experience in that store rather than to a person who has worked in other stores. Dave Betts is department manager of the clothing department of a large store, and points out he was selected for the position and did not apply.

"You have to understand every aspect of selling," Dave continues. "One day you are explaining to senior management how much your department is selling, and the next you are discussing a particular item with a salesclerk.

"Going out into the department is the only way to assess how the stock is moving," Dave says. "You have to get merchandise into the store from the buyers, show new and fashionable items quickly and then mark prices down at just the right time to keep an item selling," he explains.

Dave also explains why it is so important to know how quickly goods are being sold. "Each department manager in this company is responsible for a certain profit. The company buyers spend 'x' amount of dollars buying merchandise, and we have to produce 'y' amount of dollars as profit. That means working out pricing systems to sell a lot of each item at a good profit."

In such a system there is little direct supervision; department managers try to achieve their set profit goals and are aware of how well they are doing. An interest in merchandising, or the presentation of goods for sale, is essential. Department managers usually make their own decisions about the promotion of goods; the only exception is when store-wide or nation-wide 'specials' are organized.

NATURE OF WORK

Dave sees promotion to either merchandising manager with responsibility for a group of departments, or to buyer. Above that level, he points out, many positions are no longer concerned with direct sale of goods but with overall planning and coordination of the work of other managers according to company policy. These positions become available when an overall knowledge of retail methods is gained through several years' experience in sales, management and buying.

Business Services Representatives

Not all salespeople are involved in the sale of products. Computers or tinned food are tangible items you can see and touch. But just as important are business services that make it possible to make and sell products. Two examples of business services are transportation and advertising.

When a company needs advice on how to ship anything from cattle to refrigerators, or a family wants to move from New Brunswick to Saskatchewan, they call a freight service representative. Jack Shuttlesworth sells rail freight services in Alberta. He calculates the amount of work required to pack and transport the products in question and quotes a price.

"I always knew that I was going to do something concerned with railroads," Jack says. "Almost everyone in my family has worked with railroads for as long as I can remember. So when I finished

To sell advertising space in a magazine, Jack must convince clients that using the publication will help to increase sales of the products which they advertise.

high school, I started as a stenographer with the railroad. Then I became an office manager and finally moved into sales.

"The company was not so concerned about my academic background because I had been working for them for several years when I applied for the job in freight sales. They knew that I could learn. So they sent me on a series of sales training courses that covered sales techniques, public speaking, and the principles of the freight business. After I had finished the courses, it was assumed that I could learn the rest from experience. And that's the way it has worked out."

Jack's customers consist of two groups. Regular customers who use the freight system frequently form the first group. The other consists of people or companies who use freight service only occasionally. Jack is expected to call on regular accounts at least once a month — more often if they need his services — to maintain good relations. He also meets occasional customers and solves their shipping problems, too. Either case requires that he design a sales presentation. "Never try to sell without knowing all about what you are selling," Jack advises. "And you have to know what's happening in the business community because conditions affect the amount of shipping that will be going on at any particular time. Aside from that, it's just a matter of time and experience until you get to know the costs and methods of freight."

Jack's position did not work out exactly as he had expected. "It wasn't as glamorous as I thought it would be," he admits. "But it is more challenging."

Frank Jameson has found that sales is one field where a person can go a long way in a short time. Just two years ago, he was graduating from a three-year college marketing program; today he is district sales representative for a national magazine.

Frank explains what his title means: "From the company's point of view, it means a senior advertising representative. I have no sales staff working for me, though. In other companies, people in my position are known as everything from space reps to advertising reps." Whatever the title, Frank's responsibility is to sell advertising space in the magazine. Advertising sales make profits for the company and pay the costs of the magazine.

Frank found it fairly difficult to get into advertising sales because he had no experience. "When I applied," he remembers, "the company wasn't taking anyone without sales experience, although that policy has been relaxed since I've been here.

"The personnel department was only going to give me a very brief interview as a courtesy. But I presented myself very strongly and was asked to go on for some aptitude tests and more interviews. They decided that if I could sell myself that well, I could also sell their magazine."

Frank was given supervised on-the-job training by the magazine's publisher. The company has since started training courses for sales staff. "If you ever want to take a part-time course outside the company, the company backs you completely," Frank says. "Any courses related to publishing or sales are an asset."

Frank organizes his work schedule carefully. "I start early in the day because it's possible to get a lot of paperwork done between 8 a.m. and 9 a.m., before clients get into their offices. By mid-morning, I like to be out making sales calls and sell for the rest of the day.

"I believe that making appointments to see clients gives me a better image. I want people to be prepared for me when I arrive. I spend as little time as possible on paperwork because sales are the only way of establishing a good track record in this business. Some sales people spend too much time doing paperwork and never get around to sales calls. You must learn to strike a balance so that you can be as productive as possible while still getting all the necessary paperwork done quickly."

A person selling magazine or newspaper advertising space also sells ideas. "On many calls you not only try to explain to customers why they should advertise in your magazine, but why they should advertise at all. You explain how your magazine could be part of a total advertising campaign to improve their company image."

No salesperson has a 100 per cent success rate. "You get a lot of rebuffs in this business and you have to get used to them," Frank says. "You tell yourself that you did the best you could, and if the

customer doesn't do what you think is best, then the customer is losing just as much as you are. Out of every 10 calls I make, I get five rebuffs. But you must still keep a good rapport with customers, because the next time you call they might change their minds."

Frank has very definite career plans. "The next step up, I hope, is to higher management positions and the executive level, perhaps with responsibility for all financial aspects of the publication. I plan to take accounting courses either full- or part-time to improve my knowledge of business and accounting procedures."

Judy Adams is an advertising sales representative for a television station in Newfoundland. Her work is similar to Frank's except that the advertising which she sells is broadcast time rather than printed space. Like Frank, Judy gets paperwork out of the way early in the morning and organizes sales calls for later in the day. By 10 or 10:30 a.m. she is usually ready to leave the office.

"The most important part of the job for me is to be creative," Judy says. "It's always challenging to persuade a client to advertise. And in this market, salespeople often help to create the commercials. I work very closely with our creative department because I know the clients and what they will accept."

Judy sells radio broadcasting time to companies wishing to advertise their products. She often helps to create the commercial to the client's satisfaction.

Judy keeps a list of contacts whom she calls regularly. "I ask if they have any sales at their stores they would like to advertise, collect information from those who want to run commercials and get back to the office in the afternoon. I supply the information to our technical staff who make up audition tapes which I then play back to the client.

"You must be energetic, aggressive and enthusiastic," Judy says. "I work on commission and my pay depends on how many sales I make. It's also challenging to know that the station depends on you to produce revenue from commercials."

Judy's background is in social sciences. She studied at university for two years with the idea of becoming a social worker, but a position with the station during the summer vacation decided her on a career in sales.

"I really enjoy public contact," she says. "And working with the interesting people at the station. I also get the opportunity to travel, although I don't like that during the winter."

Judy says she is treated just the same as the men who are doing the same work she does, and that she is expected to produce on the same basis as the rest of the sales staff. As she enjoys meeting people so much, Judy feels that she would prefer to move into the public relations department of the station rather than to be promoted to a management position in sales.

Insurance Sales Agents

Before insurance was invented there was no protection against financial loss. If a person's home burned down, that person might be destroyed financially. If a person died, the dependents were left without a source of income.

Then someone realized that if all homeowners paid a small amount of money into a central fund, that fund could help a person rebuild a home that had burned down. Or, if all heads of households paid into a central fund, the fund could support the dependents when the head of a household died.

In other words, insurance operates on the principle that not all homes are going to be destroyed and not everyone will die at the same age. So, by paying a small amount of money, a premium, into a pool, individuals could protect themselves and their families against misfortune.

Insurance agents are the people who sell insurance. Before collecting premiums, however, they plan and offer various types of coverage (life, automobile or accident, for example) for sale to clients. They determine the clients' needs, suggest changes in coverage, help complete application or accident forms, and arrange medical examinations and payments to their clients when something has gone wrong.

Insurance agents discuss insurance needs and advise clients on financial matters. Dan found his commerce degree a good basis for a sales career.

There are two major groups of insurance agents. One sells insurance to protect against financial losses from death or illness. The other offers insurance against losses of property. Some companies insure against both loss types, while others specialize in either life or property insurance.

Dan Stride became a life insurance agent when he graduated from a university commerce program. "Today, most insurance companies require a university degree from their agents," Dan points out, "and because this is a financial business, I felt that commerce was a good choice. Many agents take commerce or business administration programs."

When he first joined the company, Dan was assigned to a classroom study program for three weeks in the head office and several more weeks of travelling with a qualified sales agent. In addition, there was a four-month correspondence course run by the Canadian Life Underwriters Association. When the company felt that Dan was ready, he was sponsored to write an examination set by the Superintendent of Insurance of the provincial government.

Dan passed the examination and received an Ontario certificate which allowed him to work as a life insurance agent. However, he was escorted on his first sales call by an experienced agent. And for almost a year he was closely supervised by the district manager who encouraged Dan and suggested how he could improve sales.

Dan points out that life insurance agents need to understand not only life insurance but pension plans, retirement plans, taxation laws, family budgeting and estate planning (how to plan a person's finances so that dependants will be financially secure).

"Life insurance is designed to help people," he says. "Many people think we are trained to sell as much insurance as possible. In fact, we are trained to analyse the customer's financial position and sell only as much insurance as the customer requires.

"I have established a good sense of trust with my customers. They often refer their friends to me for insurance, so my business has grown quite quickly.

NATURE OF WORK

"For me, the best part of my work is that I can be my own boss," Dan says. "All my career expectations have been realized."

Although much of an agent's time is spent discussing customers' finances and advising them on insurance matters, there is a great deal of paperwork to be done at the office. Each time an insurance policy is sold to a customer, the agent must fill in forms and send them to the company's head office. The insurance agent must arrange for buyers of life insurance policies to have a medical examination. The agent sees that the results of the medical are also sent to the head office.

After both the policy request and medical results are examined, the company decides whether the company will insure the customer. You can read more fully about these procedures in the Careers Canada booklet, "Occupations in Insurance and Real Estate."

Once the decision has been made to go ahead with the policy, the insurance agent finalizes the agreement with the customer, delivers the policy document and arranges in detail how premiums are to be paid. After policies have been sold, agents try to keep in touch with all their customers so they can adjust insurance coverage whenever a customer's financial position changes.

Some insurance agents specialize in selling one or more types of insurance. A group representative, for instance, only sells insurance to cover groups of people, usually the employees of a company. A general insurance agent sells many types of insurance against loss or damage to property, cars or homes.

Jacques Laberge is a general insurance agent in Quebec and sells policies to protect personal and commercial or industrial property against fire, theft or other damage.

"I was studying business administration at university when one of my friends who was an insurance agent explained what it was like to work in the insurance business," Jacques explains. "I admit I was prejudiced against insurance, but my friend pointed out many advantages I had never thought of, and I realised I might be suited to such work. To become an agent I had to pass an exam set by the province, for which I studied at a Collège d'Enseignement Général et Professionel. Once I was qualified to act as an insurance agent I decided to take a further course offered by the Institut d'assurance de l'Est du Québec. I didn't have to take the second course, but it improved my knowledge," Jacques says.

Insurance examinations are set by most provincial governments, although not always by the same department of the provincial government. Insurance companies will inform applicants for sales positions of provincial examination requirements.

"The agent is an intermediary between the customer and the insurance company," Jacques explains. "I gather all necessary information about clients depending on whether they need fire, car, machinery, home, furnace or marine insurance. For instance, if I want to insure a lumber business, I bring in an inspector from the company to collect data on the client's profits, number of employees, the building, equipment, cars, trucks, the cost of a possible interruption of business and so on. Then I help draw up a policy that I think the company will accept, including details on premiums and benefits. We have rate books giving all the figures. Then the policy is sent to the company for acceptance."

Much of an insurance agent's time can be spent contacting new clients. "I meet many of my clients at business conventions or at social gatherings," Jacques says. "I have no regular work schedule, and often spend part of the evening with clients if they are too busy to see me earlier. To do this work well you must like meeting people and be able to assess their financial situation and ask for other information politely. There are a lot of forms to be filled in, which is the only thing I sometimes don't like. What I do like is to get new clients, and this takes practice. I would advise anyone interested in the field to get experience and training with a large company, as I did."

Real Estate Agents

Although John Osman has a university degree, his main qualification for real estate sales was his interest in houses. "I taught for a few years, then started to look around for a house," John explains. "I realized that this would be a good field to get into, as you can make money according to the amount of property you sell or rent out; I'm highly motivated to make money that way."

Some real estate agents specialize in selling only homes or in renting commercial or industrial space. John is a general real estate agent, but spends most of his time dealing in houses because he enjoys that most.

John was able to enter real estate without any specific training, but all real estate agents must meet the requirements of the province in which they are working. All provincial governments require that real estate agents be licensed before they are allowed to practise. As John works in Newfoundland, he had to obtain a licence issued by the Department of Provincial Affairs. In some provinces, you must take a specified course of training and pass an examination before being awarded a licence.

A typical day for a real estate agent begins by studying the company's listings of the property on the market. When a person wishes to sell a house through a real estate firm, the house is put on the list of available property. Then, when people call asking about houses, the agents are able to glance quickly through the listings to find suitable property.

"You keep independent hours," John says. "I usually arrange things so that I'm available in the mornings if anyone wants to come by to discuss property or if I have to draw up agreements for sale or rental of property. Then the afternoons are free to show property or to look at what is available. I often have to show houses during the evening, as that's the only time when people who work are available."

Although many homes are sold through agents like John, new homes may be sold by sales staff who work for the company that built them. This is especially true of new housing developments. If a customer is not interested in a home in one development, the sales staff may try to find a home in another development belonging to the same company.

In either case, real estate sales staff usually work on a commission basis; that is, they are paid a certain percentage of the value of property which they sell. You can read more about careers in real estate in the Careers Canada booklet, "Occupations in Insurance and Real Estate."

While real estate agents spend a great deal of time viewing property and meeting clients, they also work in the office to draw up sales contracts and to contact new customers. John spends some time each day checking the company's property listings.

Securities Salespersons

Companies frequently require more money than they receive as income from sales. To raise this money, they often borrow from banks or sell securities in the form of stocks and bonds. An individual who buys stock in a company is buying a part or 'share' of the ownership of that company. While the individual keeps the stock, he or she may receive money in the form of a dividend from the company; the amount of money received depends to a large extent on how profitable the company has been and, of course, on the number of shares the individual owns. Shares can be sold at any time, provided that there is a buyer. An individual who buys a bond essentially lends to the company the amount of money paid for the bond; the company agrees to repay the amount of the bond on a specific date and also to pay interest during the life of the bond.

Stocks and bonds are bought and sold for individuals and companies by securities salespersons. Known as stock brokers, these individuals are employed by brokerage firms. The stock broker often advises the firm's customers as to which securities they should buy or sell, and then places buy and sell orders on behalf of the customers. The broker receives a commission on each transaction; the amount of the commission is based on the total value of shares bought or sold.

The buy and sell orders placed by a broker are carried out by securities traders employed by the brokerage firm.

"You've got to be alert and think fast to work as a securities trader," according to Jason Bloch, a floor trader in Toronto. "On the floor of the stock exchange there's a lot of shouting and running around.

"I started as an assistant fresh out of university with an economics degree. I learned the way the trading floor operates, and have worked my way up since then."

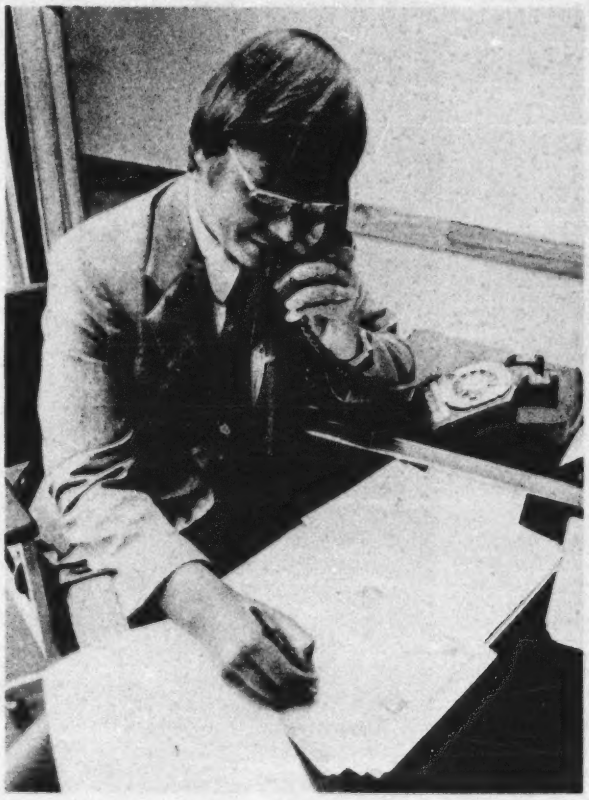
Not all traders work on the stock exchange floor. In fact, many never go near the stock exchange. Block stock traders operate over the telephone with traders at other brokerage firms, bankers and major corporations. Regardless of where they work, all traders must be aware of the prices of stocks and bonds and know market conditions.

In recent years, a new type of group investment, mutual funds, has developed. It consists of people pooling their money to buy shares of many different companies. If these individuals did not pool their investment money, they would not be able to buy such a wide selection of securities.

A few years ago, Gord Sheppard was an accountant with some money to invest. After talking with an investment counsellor for one of the mutual funds, Gord decided to apply for a job as a salesperson for the mutual fund company.

The company gave Gord several aptitude tests when he applied. Once accepted, he was given company-run training courses. In addition, he studied a correspondence course prepared by the Canadian Mutual Funds Association. Finally, he had to pass a provincial examination as all provinces and territories require mutual fund salespersons to pass examinations set by the province or territory where they work.

Gord's accounting background proves useful in his work selling mutual funds, advising clients on financial matters.



"When you're advising someone on investments, you have to know the investment options. It isn't just a matter of knowing the best prices for securities; you also have to know about income tax laws and investment procedures because people can save on taxes by making certain investment decisions," Gord says.

At first, Gord worked as supervisor. His first customers were investing between $15.00 and $100.00 a month. After he had been thoroughly trained, Gord worked with the customers who have larger amounts to invest.

While in the office, Gord prepares presentations for his customers which explain the investments he will recommend. When a customer agrees to make a purchase, a sales contract is drawn up. At the same time, Gord makes sure that each customer understands the range of financial services offered by the company he represents. That way the customer may come back for further business.

"You have to be a self-starter in this field," Gord says. "The first year, when you're learning, is hard. But if you put extra effort into that year, the second is really rewarding."

In security sales careers you are responsible for the investment of other people's money, a sound university background in business administration and economics combined with work experience is an asset. The booklet "Careers in Banking and Finance" in this series provides further information on occupations in the fields of finance and investment.

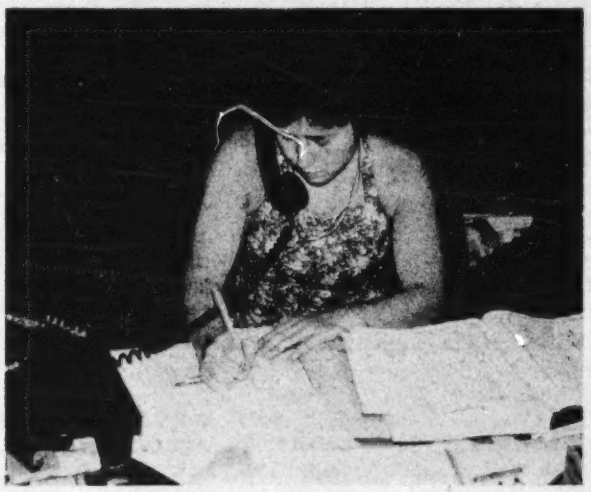
Travel Agents

Margaret Reese is a travel agent in Nova Scotia. She is employed by a company that specializes in making travel arrangements for people, although travel agents can also work in the travel section of large department stores.

"I believe that travelling is a tremendous learning experience for everyone, whether it's undertaken for work or pleasure," Margaret says. "This is no routine sort of work; I have to arrange each sale or trip especially for each customer, whether I am arranging a simple one-way ticket or an around-the-world tour."

A travel agent plans all the connections for the customer's trip and makes all hotel reservations. This may involve dealing with several companies – an airline, a hotel and perhaps a car rental agency – to make sure that everything is taken care of. In other cases, only one company is involved. This happens when a customer decides to buy a 'package tour' from a company that specializes in arranging complete holidays. Holidays are described in the company's brochure and customers decide which they would like and ask Margaret to make the arrangements. She then contacts the tour company and checks that space is available on the holiday, fills out the appropriate forms to make the reservation, and delivers tickets to the customer when payment is made.

As a travel agent, Margaret deals with airlines, hotels, travel companies and car rental agencies to arrange trips for customers. Much of her time is spent on the telephone.



NATURE OF WORK

"Most of my work is done on the phone." Margaret says. "I make all the plans and find the best rates for wherever the customer wants to go."

Whenever Margaret plans a trip of any kind for a customer, she has to inform the customer of all details of travel arrangements including baggage allowances, medical and visa requirements and departure dates.

"I think that some people don't realize that it costs them nothing to go to a travel agent, even if it's just for one plane ticket," Margaret says. "The travel agent's fee is paid for on a commission basis by the travel company, airline or hotel. You get a certain percentage of the total fee for making the sales of of services to the customer."

There are sometimes extra details to attend to, such as informing customers about rates of foreign exchange for Canadian dollars or giving them general advice about the country to be visited, should the customer ask. "It's great fun, a learning experience and you meet a real cross-section of the public," Margaret says. "Sometimes when everyone seems to want to go to the same place at once and the phones are ringing non-stop it's an effort to be nice to everyone. But you have to be patient, and take time to read all the travel literature carefully. You really have to know your geography, although you are given a few weeks' training when you join a company. And it's always nice to know you've helped people enjoy their holiday or made a business trip for someone."

Auctioneers

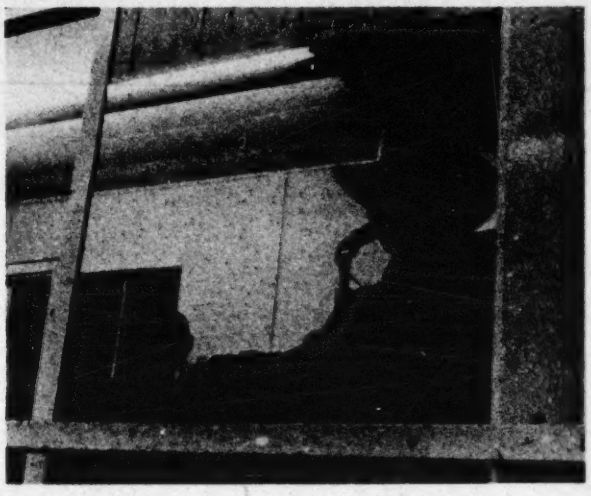
Anyone who has been to an auction knows that an auctioneer combines a variety of skills. But whether auctioneers sell antiques or livestock, the basic technique is the same: to sell goods or property to the highest bidder.

Gary Mastersen is a livestock auctioneer at an Alberta stockyard. "I was born and raised on a farm, and during high school I worked part-time as a ring attendant at the auctions and led cattle round the ring. When I finished school, I took a two-week course in auctioneering to learn the history and theory of auctioneering. The course also gives you lots of practical experience in calling bids."

The Western Canada School of Auctioneering is the only institute in Canada offering training to auctioneers. Any auctioneer who wishes to work in Alberta must attend the course, although in other provinces a business licence, issued by the municipal or provincial government, is the only requirement.

"Auctioneers must be able to judge the quality of the goods they are selling in order to set reasonable prices," Gary says. "In my case, I need a sound knowledge of the livestock industry. That includes a knowledge of pedigrees, of current price trends and government pricing policies."

Auctioneers combine a knowledge of the articles or produce they sell with a sharp eye to spot bidders and a strong, clear voice. Gary worked part-time at the cattle-ring of an Alberta stockyard to gain experience before training as a livestock auctioneer.



One thing all auctioneers must have is a strong, clear voice. "I work 40 minutes on and 20 minutes off," Gary says," and up to 60 hours a week but not all that time is spent calling bids."

At the start of each sale, Gary quickly appraises the animals to be sold and estimates opening bids. Once people start to bid, he must judge the point at which people are unwilling to go further and sell to the highest bidder.

General auctioneers who travel from place to place selling property and goods often arrange an entire auction. Before the sale is due to take place, they group items according to value and usually make a list with estimated starting prices.

Some auctioneers work for companies specialising in auction sales. For such sales, catalogues are often prepared in advance, either by the auctioneer or, as is usually the case, by a company appraiser who is trained to assess the value of furniture, art work or other property. The appraiser would then suggest starting bids for the auctioneer.

Qualifications for auctioneers depend on the goods which they sell. Many auctioneers start as clerks or store helpers, moving items onto the sales floor as required. Auctions of expensive items are usually set up several days in advance to allow prospective buyers to browse, so it is sometimes possible to start in this field by helping an auctioneer set up a sale.

All auctioneers must have stamina to keep up a brisk pace for several hours at a time. Experience in public speaking is always an asset.

PREPARATION AND TRAINING

It is possible to prepare for a career in the retail sales field while still at school by working in a store during evenings, weekends and vacations. Positions as sales clerk, shelf stocker or packer would give you experience with the public and with merchandise. You may be given responsibility for handling cash in these positions. This would allow you to see the operation and organization of the store to decide whether you would like to make a career in retail sales.

High school commerce programs provide a useful background for those who wish to enter the sales field. A good knowledge of math is essential, as is the ability to express yourself clearly when dealing with the public.

For those who wish to progress to management positions, a university degree or college diploma in commerce, economics or business administration is a definite asset. Most companies recruit management personnel from two sources – people with experience and enthusiasm within the company or people with appropriate education and a proven work record from outside the company.

ADVANCEMENT

For a person with enthusiasm, who is willing to learn, it is possible to advance from a position as sales clerk to that of store manager. Advancement and promotion can be aided by taking evening or part-time courses in commerce, business administration or personnel management. Supervisory positions in sales are usually given to salespersons who have shown organizational ability and can achieve a high level of sales whether they are selling clothing in a department store or planning an overall sales campaign for a product.

For a number of the occupations described in this booklet, a university or college education is an asset and may be required by some employers. Extension courses from post-secondary institutes leading to a degree or diploma would help chances of promotion to more senior posts.

This is a field in which the ability and confidence to act on your own initiative will increase chances for advancement.

FUTURE OUTLOOK

In 1975 there were well over a million people working in sales occupations in Canada. This includes people described in this booklet, plus others such as door-to-door salespeople, street vendors, newspaper vendors and people who drive trucks on specific routes to deliver and sell goods.

By 1982 it is expected that the number of people working in sales occupations will have grown to nearly 1,200,000, an increase of about 18 per cent over the 1975 figure. The Canadian labour force, a total of all people working in all occupations, is expected to grow between 14 and 21 per cent over the same period.

Opportunities in the sales field are therefore much the same as in most occupations. The Future Outlook chart shows the number of people working in the main occupational groups discussed in this booklet for 1975 and 1982. Most groups of occupations which include sales management occupations are also expected to increase at an average rate. For instance, there were 15,350 people employed in all sales management occupations in 1975, a number which is expected to increase to 17,700 by 1982.

The only groups which compare unfavourably with the national average growth rates for all occupations are news vendors and route delivery salespeople. Otherwise, a career in sales offers favourable opportunities for career seekers.

WHAT'S THE NEXT STEP?

Choosing a career is a serious business and should be approached carefully. The best approach is to ask as many questions as possible to as many people as possible.

Two good sources of information are a Canada Manpower Centre counsellor or school guidance counsellor. They could help you decide whether your interests and abilities are suited to the very special demands which are made by some of these sales industry occupations.

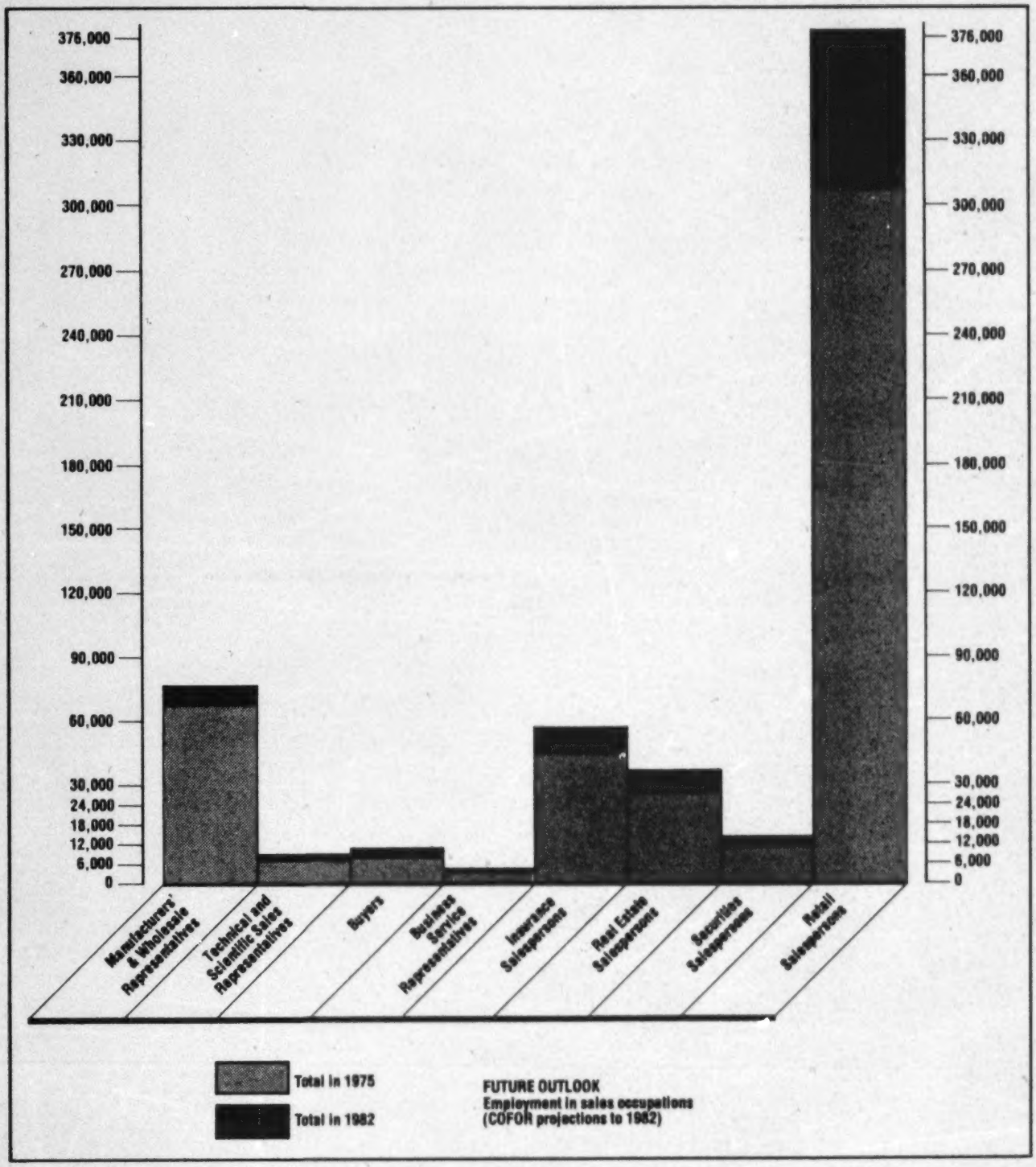
Your Canada Manpower Centre has a staff of counsellors who will be able to tell you more about the employment opportunities available in these occupations, either in your own area or in other towns and provinces.

Canada Manpower Centres also have a course that might help you, called The Creative Job Search Technique (CJST). This course explains the basics of getting work as well as how to present yourself to future employers. You would be shown how to write a résumé (a list of your qualifications and experience) and a letter of application, how to fill out application forms and how to conduct yourself during interviews.

The most important decision has to be your own, however. *You* have to decide what you would like to do – as well as what you are qualified to do. Remember that you are the one who will be spending your life in the career you select; so choose wisely.

Sales careers are best suited to people who find satisfaction from dealing with others; the best salespersons are self-motivated achievers. Only you know whether you fit this description.

FUTURE OUTLOOK



RELATED PUBLICATIONS

This is one of a series of Careers Canada booklets which has been prepared for your information. Even though you may find some of the careers described here exactly what you had in mind for yourself, you may find other equally exciting careers in other booklets. Before you decide on a career, try to know about as many career possibilities as possible. You will find a list of Careers Canada titles elsewhere in this booklet.

Those interested in management or marketing positions should consider taking a university or college program in business administration. Calendars and brochures giving specific information about the content, length and cost of such programs are available from universities and colleges on request.

Many large companies such as major manufacturing companies, insurance companies and nationwide department store chains have their own training programs for sales staff and have literature which they are pleased to send to potential employees. You could call or write to the personnel department of companies you are interested in and ask for such literature.

For specific information about any career described in this booklet, check with your local Canada Manpower Centre for the Careers Provinces leaflets which have been prepared to supplement this booklet. These Careers Provinces pamphlets provide detailed information regarding preparation and training, salary scales and working conditions for each occupation in each province and territory.